

# Book Reviews

The Western Journal of Medicine does not review all books sent by publishers, although information about new books received is printed elsewhere in the journal as space permits. Prices quoted are those given by the publishers.

**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CARDIOVASCULAR DRUGS**—Edited by John Coltart, MD, MRCP, FACC, Consultant Physician in Cardiology, St. Thomas' Hospital, London, and David E. Jewitt, BSc, MB, BS, FRCP, Director of Cardiac Department and Consultant Cardiologist, King's College Hospital, London. Churchill Livingstone, Inc., 1560 Broadway, New York, NY 10036, 1982. 348 pages, \$59.00.

This book is the result of a symposium which was held on the topic of cardiovascular drugs. The volume, therefore, is a mixture of the strengths and weaknesses of a symposium turned into a book.

On the negative side, there is uneven treatment of the various topics, presumably due to the time each author spent in providing a written record of his talk. Some very important topics are only briefly covered, while other topics occupy lengthy chapters. There is also a highly selective list of topics and drugs. Thus, this volume is but a sampling of some new developments which were felt to be of importance when the symposium was organized.

On the positive side, the information is relatively new and does deal with a number of drugs that are not yet available for clinical use, especially inotropic and antiarrhythmic drugs. The discussion at the end of each chapter also provides differing points of view, which is always one of the most valuable aspects of any symposium. Some of the general chapters are particularly well done, so that one can certainly benefit from reading this volume. In general, it stands on its own as a good example of the kind of report that can be prepared from an interesting symposium on up-to-date cardiovascular therapy.

WILLIAM W. PARMLEY, MD  
Professor of Medicine  
University of California  
San Francisco

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**GUIDE TO DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING—Volume I: THE LIVER & SPLEEN**—Alexander Kovac, MD, Chief, Radiology Service, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Phoenix; Adjunct Assistant Professor of Radiology, University of Arizona College of Medicine, Tucson. Medical Examination Publishing Co., Inc., 3003 New Hyde Park Road, New Hyde Park, New York 11040, 1982. 229 pages, \$33.00 (hardcover).

This is the first volume in a series that is intended to provide guidelines for ordering imaging examinations for those who are "either closely or remotely associated with medical imaging." The task that the author has set for himself in this series is an important one, but also a very difficult one. This first volume on the liver and spleen includes chapters or sections on anatomy, embryology, physiology and laboratory tests as well as the various imaging modalities and disease categories. Although the overall presentation provides useful information to the uninitiated, I think that the imaging subspecialist in each of the areas of computed tomography, ultrasound, nuclear medicine and angiography will take exception to many of the details in the discussion of his imaging modality. Tables are provided throughout the book with comment on the usefulness of the various imaging modalities. However, the comments are not sufficiently specific to allow the nonimager to determine the appropriate diagnostic imaging algorithm for a given clinical situation. In addition, it is disconcerting to find no mention of the desirability for consultation between the re-

ferring physician and the radiologist. Such consultation is particularly important at a time when rapid evolution of imaging modalities is occurring and when local expertise and equipment in the various modalities varies significantly. The strength of this book is its overview of general information related to the liver and spleen. This information may be most useful to imaging technologists and others who are involved in carrying out diagnostic imaging studies, but will probably be of limited use to those who are responsible for ordering imaging procedures.

WILLIAM C. KLINGENSMITH III, MD  
Associate Professor of Radiology  
Director, Division of Nuclear Medicine  
University of Colorado Health Sciences Center  
Denver

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**THE YOUNGEST SCIENCE, NOTES OF A MEDICINE-WATCHER**—Lewis Thomas, MD, chancellor of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York. Viking Press, Inc., 625 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022, 1983. 270 pages, \$14.75.

In this, the meditations of a modern man of medicine, we sit at the feet of a warmhearted storyteller. Dr Lewis Thomas is a medical philosopher with a keen sense of history. He is a talented essayist. In this book he speaks lovingly of the early days when his father practiced the *art* of medicine. As his story progresses he seems to stand back in order to observe, with awe, and some discomfiture, as *art* gave way to science. This, in spite of the fact that as a research worker he has taken part in this metamorphosis.

Dr Thomas writes with honesty and with respect for intellectual curiosity. His essays reach into nooks and crannies of the wonderful world of medicine. He makes the story of biochemistry, DNA-RNA and miracle medications understandable. He views with abject wonder the "computerized devices that reveal electronic intimacies of the flawed heart or malfunctioning brain with a precision far beyond the touch or reach, or even the imagining of the physician at the bedside a few generations back."

Do we discern, as we read between the lines, that this practitioner of the science of medicine yearns for a return to the art of medicine? He regrets that "too many doctors are more committed to the machinery than to the patient." He fears that technology has increased the distance between the physician and patient.

This is an honest, down-to-earth evaluation of medical practice in 1983. It will be of interest to young people entering the world of medicine. Indeed, it may give them pause. He writes, "If I were a medical student or an intern just getting ready to begin, I would be apprehensive that my real job, caring for sick people, might soon be taken away, leaving me with the quite different occupation of looking after the machines."

On the other hand, the practicing physician who proudly wears several service stripes on his white uniform, will enjoy waves of nostalgia as he reads this elegant book. And then, as he writes his orders for CT scans, echocardiograms and radio-immune assays, he will also remember to sit at the bedside, to talk and to listen, and to touch.

E. R. W. FOX, MD  
Coeur D'Alene, Idaho